

WILLIE UNSCATHED BY SIMPSON FIRE; PIG WOMAN'S STORY BATTERED DOWN

Sleuth Testifies Mrs. Gibson Didn't Identify Accused

By JACK MILEY
GRAPHIC Staff Correspondent

SOMERVILLE, N. J., Nov. 24.—Like a house built of cards, the state's case against the three Hall-Mills murder defendants appeared doomed this afternoon to buckle, if not collapse completely, under the weight of unshaken testimony hurled against it by the defense.

Clergymen, who looked strangely out of place in a court room, came to batter down the barricade of guilt which Special Prosecutor Simpson had sought to erect around Mrs. Frances Stevens Hall and her brothers, Willie and Henry Stevens.

A young married woman, now the mother of two children, appeared to bare a past life, braving humiliation and embarrassment to pass the lie to her companion in De Russeys Lane the night the Rev. Edward W. Hall and Mrs. Eleanor R. Mills were slain.

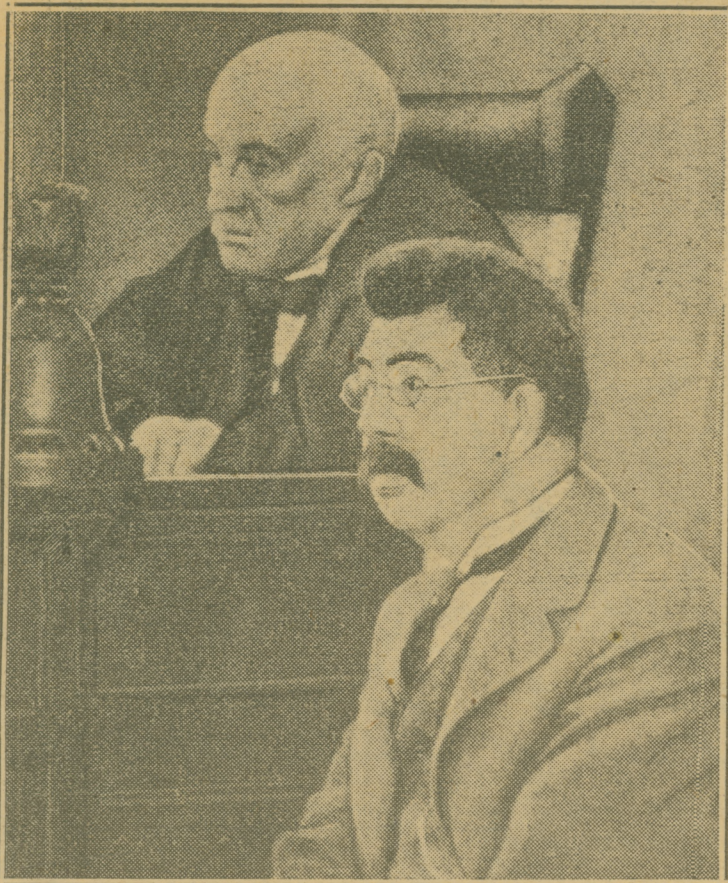
Moon Not Full

From Princeton University there emerged a noted astronomer to offset by carefully kept records the prosecution's claim that there was a full moon on that fatal September 14, 1922. Mrs. Jane Gibson, the "pig woman," testified the moon was full.

A daughter arrayed herself against her own mother in denying she had seen "love spies" following the minister and his choir singer as they kept their illicit tryst.

Claiming he had been chained to a bed, a youth declared he had

Bland Willie Foils Prosecution



ECCENTRIC Willie Stevens proved himself the equal of Prosecutor Simpson in a battle of wits. Unperturbed and calm, Willie occupied the center of the stage as he fought for his life on the witness stand. Maintaining a well-balanced poise in contrast to that of Senator Simpson, Willie emerged from the ordeal of cross-examination with flying colors. With clasped hands, the bespectacled Willie adroitly foiled the traps laid for him by the prosecutor.

the innocence of the defendants, but out of the maze of testimony, that of Willie Stevens, just as yesterday afternoon, seemed to strike deepest into the thoughts of the jurors.

Polite in the extreme, modest, yet radiating assurance, Willie once more emerged victor in his battle of wits with the learned and wiry Simpson.

Described as having the mentality of a child, Willie, well past the half-century mark, proved the antithesis of what had been claimed for him. His mind, be it ever so limited, functioned with precision and an accuracy that came well-nigh unbalancing the fiery prosecutor.

Simpson Gives Up

Only eight minutes by the big clock in the balcony did the barrister of state-wide reputation vie with the so-called half wit. At the end of that short period, he, Simpson, indicated he was willing to admit defeat by excusing Willie.

"Was I all right?" he asked Mrs. Hall as he resumed his seat beside her.

A pat on the hand, a smile and a slight bow of the widow's head registered the unanimous approval, not only of the defense, but of the spectators as well.

For in those brief eight minutes Willie had convinced listeners, as well as the special prosecutor, that he was qualified to assume a man's place among men.

Fails to Catch Him Napping

Always leaning toward the dramatic, ever alert to catch an opposing witness in a moment of aberration, Simpson did the unexpected by suddenly producing three shells.

He asked if these would fit the revolver Willie admitted having once owned.

"No, sir," came the reply immediately. "Only .32-caliber Union Metallic would fit mine. These are Peters shells."

Intent on breaking through the calmness of the witness, the spe-

cial prosecutor took up the defendant's physical condition. Willie said he never had suffered from epilepsy, and was then asked if he would submit to an examination by a physician before the trial ends.

"I would have to consult my counsel," was his quick retort.

The next reference was to Felix Di Martini, the private detective engaged by Mrs. Hall in 1922. Willie admitted having spoken to him on numerous occasions, but denied the sleuth ever had questioned him as to his whereabouts the night of the murders.

Walks Proudly to Stand

It was four minutes after court convened when the eccentric de-



Almeda Harkins Charlotte Mills

fendant walked proudly to the stand and Senator Simpson renewed his cross-examination.

Q. I understood you to say yesterday you hardly knew Mrs. Mills? A. That's right.

Q. Isn't it a fact you frequently took notes to the Mills home, often staying two hours in the presence of her daughter, Charlotte? A. No sir. I was there once, but only on the piazza.

Q. What were you doing there? A. My sister sent me to see Mr. Mills about some boxes he was making.

"And you never were at her place talking to her for two hours, any time before the murder?"

"No, sir."

"Did you tell the Middlesex county prosecutor, during the investigation in 1922, that on the night of the murders you never

Conflicting Statements Of Mrs. Gibson Shown

left your room until you went out to the church with your sister?"

"I'm not positive about that. I'll say that I don't remember whether I did or not."

Can't Remember

"But you don't understand, the questions, Mr. Stevens. Did you or did you not tell the prosecutor at that time that you did not go downstairs, see your sister, bid her good-night and then go to bed, as you testified yesterday that you did?"

"I can't remember that."

Simpson showed Willie the three shells, asking if they would fit his revolver.

A. No, sir. The kind that would fit my revolver were .32-caliber Union Metallic. These are Peters shells.

Q. The day before the murder did you have a suit pressed to wear to a firemen's parade? A. No.

Q. You say you never had epilepsy. Would you mind if I had a physician examine you before the trial is over? A. I would have to consult my counsel.

Simpson bowed. "You use good judgment."

"Thank you, sir," said Willie, and beamed broadly.

Q. The day of the murder did your visit to a Hungarian family

in his story, and the state had failed in what many had believed would be a triumph.

Willie leaned eagerly toward his



JAMES F. MASON

sister as he returned to his seat in the prisoner's dock.

"Was I all right?" he asked.

Mrs. Hall smiled—a grateful smile it seemed—and slipped her gray gloved hand into the larger one Willie had placed in her lap. Brother and sister looked at each other and there was a moisture in the eyes of both.

The Rev. J. Mervin Pettit, Dr. Hall's successor in the church of St. John the Evangelist, was the next witness. The athletically built clergyman was called to testify as to Willie's baptismal record from the church register.

Tells of Birth Records

Simpson had charged before that there was no record of the eccentric defendant's christening, and insinuated he was a mulatto, born of a mulatto mother.

Q. What do the records show in respect to William's baptism? A. On June 16, 1872, William Carpenter Stevens. Born in Aiken,

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SERG. FRED SANDBERG

been offered money by a government witness to swear he had been in De Russeys Lane.

The Middlesex county detective in charge of the 1922 investigation, said Mrs. Jane Gibson, the "pig woman," had been unable at that time to identify Henry and Willie Stevens as the men she had seen on the Phillips farm.

Several witnesses said they saw Mrs. Hall the day of the funeral of her husband and that there was no scratch on her face, as a hears driver and photographers testified.

Willie Impresses Jurors

Many others went on the stand and raised their voices to establish

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